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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

POEMS
BY
WITTER BYNNER

APOLLO TROUBADOUR



WHEN a wandering Italian
Yesterday at noon
Played upon his hurdy-gurdy
Suddenly a tune,
There was magic in my ear-drums:
Like a baby's cup and spoon
Tinkling time for many sleigh-bells,
Many no-school, rainy-day-bells,
Cow-bells, frog-bells, run-away-bells,
Mingling with an ocean medley
As of elemental people
More emotional than wordy,—
Mermaids laughing off their tantrums,
Mermen singing loud and sturdy,—
Silver scales and fluting shells,
Popping weeds and gurgles deadly,
Coral chime from coral steeple,
Intermittent deep-sea bells
Ringing over floating knuckles,
Buried gold and swords and buckles,
And a thousand bubbling chuckles,
Yesterday at noon,—

Poems: Witter Bynner

Such a melody as star-fish,
And all fish that really are fish,
In a gay, remote battalion
Play at midnight to the moon!

Could any playmate on our planet,
Hid in a house of earth's own granite,
Be so devoid of primal fire
That a wind from this wild crated lyre
Should find no spark and fan it?
Would any lady half in tears,
Whose fashion, on a recent day
Over the sea, had been to pay
Vociferous gondoliers,
Beg that the din be sent away
And ask a gentleman, gravely treading
As down the aisle at his own wedding,
To toss the foreigner a quarter
Bribing him to leave the street;
That motor-horns and servants' feet
Familiar might resume, and sweet
To her offended ears,
The money-music of her peers!

Apollo listened, took the quarter
With his hat off to the buyer,
Shrugged his shoulder small and sturdy,
Led away his hurdy-gurdy
Street by street, then turned at last

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Toward a likelier piece of earth
Where a stream of chatter passed,
Yesterday at noon;
By a school he stopped and played
Suddenly a tune
What a melody he made!
Made in all those eager faces,
Feet and hands and fingers!
How they gathered, how they stayed
With smiles and quick grimaces,
Little man and little maid:—
How they took their places,
Hopping, skipping, unafraid,
Darting, rioting about,
Squealing, laughing, shouting out!
How, beyond a single doubt,
In my own feet sprang the ardour
(Even now the motion lingers)
To be joining in their paces!
Round and round the handle went,—
Round their hearts went harder;—
Apollo urged the happy rout
And beamed, ten times as well content
With every son and daughter
As though their little hands had lent
The gentleman his quarter.—
(You would not guess—nor I deny—
That that same gentleman was I!)

Poems: Witter Bynner

No gentleman may watch a god
With proper happiness therefrom;
So street by street again I trod
The way that we had come.
He had not seen me following
And yet I think he knew;
For still, the less I heard of it,
The more his music grew:
As if he made a bird of it
To sing the distance through. . . .
And, O Apollo, how I thrilled,
You liquid-eyed rascalion,
With every twig and twist of Spring,
Because your music rose and filled
Each leafy vein with dew,—
With melody of olden sleigh-bells,
Over-the-sea-and-far-away-bells,
And the heart of an Italian,
And the tinkling cup and spoon,—
Such a melody as star-fish,
And all fish that really are fish,
In a gay remote battalion
Play at midnight to the moon!

ONE OF THE CROWD

Oh I longed, when I went in the woods today,
To see the fauns come out and play,